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SUBJECT: USUN ROME HITS THE GROUND SPRINTING: A LOOK BACK ON OUR
FIRST YEAR WITH PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SHOP

REF:(A) Rome 2049 (B) Rome 2194 (C) Rome 4673

1. Summary. Confronted by a world media environment that takes daily shots at U.S. foreign policy, USUN Rome pulled no punches during its first year with a Public Diplomacy office. The Ambassador's trips to Africa brought journalists face-to-face with U.S. assistance in action. Combined with creative outreach to Rome-based international media, USUN Rome put American generosity and our commitment to millions of people in Africa in headlines around the world.

2. With the UN General Assembly in session, critics have been spouting the usual rhetoric about U.S. policy towards Africa. In the face of this, USUN Rome has found ways to bring the message of U.S. generosity to the headlines. During our first year with a PD shop, media outreach has been coupled with efforts to institutionalize tried-and-true State Department Public Diplomacy programs, including Speakers and International Visitors. Given our modest office size and budget, we found ways to partner with other missions on common themes. Looking ahead, we hope to convince Public Affairs colleagues worldwide that U.S. humanitarian generosity is a PD theme that we all share, and seek out ways to link information that passes through Rome with audiences around the world. End Summary.

POSITIVE MESSAGES TO A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

3. The U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome launched a full-time public diplomacy office in July 2004 with the arrival of our first PD officer. With a message that could put us on the public diplomacy offensive as we highlighted America's great humanitarian commitment, the first thrust of our PD effort was to reach out to international press, targeting Muslim media as often as possible. From the beginning, we found journalists open and interested in our themes. We took advantage of the Ambassador's fact-finding trips to some of the world's worst humanitarian crisis areas to invite press to accompany him and our PD officer. The result was worldwide coverage of the United States' efforts to help these disadvantaged people. A few examples:

ZIMBABWE "FOOD KNOWS NO POLITICS"

4. In August 2005, Ambassador Tony Hall led a visit to Zimbabwe to observe the plight of the country's chronically food insecure and the fallout from the GOZ's Operation Murambatsvina or "Throw Out Trash." Overwhelming interest among local and wire journalists produced more than 120 headlines worldwide that spotlighted U.S. concerns about the growing food emergency and the need for immediate action by the GOZ. New York Times, The Independent, Guardian and BBC led with U.S. concerns about the food security situation. Several highlighted the USG's desire to not play politics with food, focusing on Ambassador Hall's announcement of a \$51.8 million injection of funds through World Food Program to Southern Africa. Newswire photos taken of a U.S. food aid distribution continue to be used to illustrate articles on Zimbabwe.

"HUNGER BANQUET" STIRS UP NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

5. Thanksgiving Eve 2004 Ambassador Hall hosted a reception that caught global attention. The event was for guests associated with an FAO Council meeting. To underline the plight of the hungry and poor, USUN Rome took the format used by Oxfam America to host a "hunger banquet." Guests chose color-coded cards that separated them into three categories of wealth. The largest group 60 percent stayed outside beneath a tent eating rice. A second group of about 25 percent ate rice and beans, and just a handful was served a full meal, complete with wine. After about 30 minutes, Ambassador Hall (who was with the group eating rice) gathered everyone inside to talk about the event and its impetus and then opened a traditional buffet.

16. International media picked up an Agence France-Presse wire story written by a reporter in attendance. The piece ran on page three in the International Herald Tribune and the front page of London's Daily Telegraph, and was repeated from India to Australia. The Ambassador spoke with several local and national BBC radio stations. The event portrayed the U.S. widely as innovative and compassionate and showed the media potential for creatively packaged "good news" stories.

SUDAN AND LIBYA

17. Press accompanying the Ambassador's November 2004 visit to Sudan and Libya projected the U.S. image as a leader working to help resolve one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The Washington Post, Cox News Service, VOA, The Economist, Sunday Times of London and Knight-Ridder joined the delegation. Arabic news services, such as Bahrain-based Al-Ayam, conveyed Hall's message about the worsening shortage of aid and his call to continue pressure on all sides of the conflict to cease violence and improve security. London-based Middle East Online reports on the North Darfur state of emergency, and uses Hall's comments about seeing burned out and abandoned villages.

18. An additional group of journalists joined the Ambassador's travel to the town of Al Kufrah in the Libyan Desert where they witnessed the long caravan of trucks winding through the sands of the Libyan desert with 6,540 metric tons of United States food aid to refugee camps in Chad. Heralding a landmark agreement with the Libyan government for the safe passage of humanitarian aid through Libya, the event produced positive international headlines on U.S. humanitarian leadership. The Panafrican News Agency voiced the story carried widely: "For the first time, the UN World Food Programme is sending United States food assistance through Libya, along a humanitarian corridor across the Sahara desert, to reach nearly 200,000 Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad."

OUTREACH GRABS HEADLINES ON AID PACKAGE

19. USUN Rome put a local spin on an important aid announcement that garnered significant coverage. In June 2005, Ambassador Hall announced the \$674 million in assistance to Africa at the annual session of the Executive Board of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP). In front of scores of UN delegates, WFP Executive Director praised the United States for its gift. Associated Press picked up a Mission-generated press release, headlining with, "U.S. famine aid package to be given immediately; package wins U.N. praise." More than 6 million listeners heard Ambassador Hall on BBC Radio Four's flagship "Today" program; another 1.3 million watched "Uno Mattina" morning news program. In the windup to Gleneagles, USUN Rome helped to focus the media spotlight on concrete U.S. efforts to tackle problems in Africa.

CULTURAL PROGRAMS RAMPED UP

110. With only four International Visitor (IV) slots being shared among the six missions in the International Organizations Bureau, USUN Rome was able to program two candidates for FY 2005. The Mission targeted key and senior officials at Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) who are important players in helping the organization improve emergency response mechanisms and program and budget issues. They forged new relationships with U.S. officials and other contacts and reported new insights to their work at FAO. For FY 2006, USUN Rome is again sending two participants: a bright up-and-comer from the Colombian Embassy and another from WFP who plays a critical role in the organization's management review process.

111. Before a Public Diplomacy section was formed, potential contacts in the Rome-based media, NGO community and academia were unaware of Mission themes, i.e. the U.S. as a leader in the fight against hunger. That has greatly changed thanks to outreach campaigns among diverse groups, including journalists, academics

and the NGO community. We have engaged new contacts not only on the message of U.S. generosity, but also on issues relating to biotechnology, UN reform, U.S. goals in the G8, and WTO and food aid, to name a few.

EMBASSY PARTNERSHIPS AMPLIFY MESSAGE

112. Given our one-officer PD shop, the Mission sought out partnerships with embassies on common themes to propel our messages even further. We shared a speaker being hosted by the Milan Consulate to program an important biotech session at the FAO. While the media spotlight on Sudan was still hot, we partnered with USUN Geneva and Embassy Cairo to gather Muslim and international media for an on-the-ground report from Ambassador Hall, following his trip. A second DVC joined Ambassadors John

Danforth and Hall with reporters in New York, thus helping to broaden stories on Darfur written by New York-based journalists who were more likely to focus on the shortcomings of the Security Council than the successes of WFP and America's role in promoting humanitarian assistance.

AN EXCITING FIRST YEAR

13. During our first year with a Public Diplomacy Officer, USUN Rome broke new ground on its effort to project an image of the United States as a global leader in fighting poverty and hunger. Recognizing the value of a strong public diplomacy campaign, Ambassador Hall fully integrated PD efforts into his work and insured that all agencies at the Mission followed suit. Thanks to generous resources from the IO Bureau, USUN Rome was able to demonstrate the power of a "good news" story, even without FSNs to help with program management. The Mission looks forward to topping its first-year success story.

HALL

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